Public Safety Video Surveillance System

333.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidance for the placement and monitoring of department public safety video surveillance, as well as the storage and release of the captured images.

This policy only applies to overt, marked public safety video surveillance systems operated by the Department. It does not apply to mobile audio/video systems, covert audio/video systems, or any other image-capturing devices used by the Department.

333.2 POLICY

The Chicopee Police Department operates a public safety video surveillance system to complement its anti-crime strategy, to effectively allocate and deploy personnel, and to enhance public safety and security in public areas. Cameras may be placed in strategic locations throughout the City to detect and deter crime, to help safeguard against potential threats to the public, to help manage emergency response situations during natural and man-made disasters, and to assist City officials in providing services to the community.

Video surveillance in public areas will be conducted in a legal and ethical manner while recognizing and protecting constitutional standards of privacy.

333.3 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Only department-approved video surveillance equipment shall be utilized. Members authorized to monitor video surveillance equipment should only monitor public areas and public activities where no reasonable expectation of privacy exists. The Chief of Police or the authorized designee shall approve all proposed locations for the use of video surveillance technology and should consult with and be guided by legal counsel as necessary in making such determinations.

333.3.1 PLACEMENT AND MONITORING

Camera placement will be guided by the underlying purpose or strategy associated with the overall video surveillance plan. As appropriate, the Chief of Police should confer with other affected City divisions and designated community groups when evaluating camera placement. Environmental factors, including lighting, location of buildings, presence of vegetation, or other obstructions, should also be evaluated when determining placement.

Cameras shall only record video images and not sound. Recorded images may be used for a variety of purposes, including criminal investigations and monitoring of activity around high-value or high-threat areas. The public safety video surveillance system may be useful for the following purposes:

(a) To prevent, deter, and identify criminal activity.

(b) To target identified areas of gang and narcotics complaints or activity.

(c) To respond to critical incidents.

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(d) To assist in identifying, apprehending, and prosecuting offenders.

(e) To document officer and offender conduct during interactions to safeguard the rights of the public and officers.

(f) To augment resources in a cost-effective manner.

(g) To monitor pedestrian and vehicle traffic activity.

Images from each camera should be recorded in a manner consistent with the underlying purpose of the particular camera. When activity warranting further investigation is reported or detected at any camera location, the available information should be provided to responding officers in a timely manner. Police Department personnel or trained Westcomm personnel, with the appropriate and corresponding video management system rights, are authorized to adjust the cameras to more effectively view a particular area for any legitimate public safety purpose.

The Chief of Police may authorize video feeds from the public safety video surveillance system to be forwarded to a specified location for monitoring by other than police personnel, such as allied government agencies, road or traffic crews, or fire or emergency operations personnel.

Unauthorized recording, viewing, reproduction, dissemination, or retention of anything documented by public safety surveillance equipment is prohibited.

333.3.2 INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TECHNOLOGY

The Department may elect to integrate its public safety video surveillance system with other technology to enhance available information. Systems such as gunshot detection, incident mapping, crime analysis, license plate recognition, and other video-based analytical systems may be considered based upon availability and the nature of department strategy.

The Department should evaluate the availability and propriety of networking or otherwise collaborating with appropriate private sector entities and should evaluate whether the use of certain camera systems, such as pan-tilt-zoom systems, video enhancement, or other analytical technology, requires additional safeguards.

333.4 VIDEO SUPERVISION

Supervisors should monitor video surveillance access and usage to ensure members follow department policy and applicable laws. Supervisors should ensure such use and access is appropriately documented.

333.4.1 PROHIBITED ACTIVITY

Public safety video surveillance systems will not intentionally be used to invade the privacy of individuals or observe areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.

Public safety video surveillance equipment shall not be used in an unequal or discriminatory manner and shall not target individuals or groups based solely on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.

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Video surveillance equipment shall not be used to harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.

333.5 STORAGE AND RETENTION OF MEDIA

All downloaded media shall be stored in a secure area with access restricted to authorized persons. A recording needed as evidence shall be copied to a suitable medium and booked into evidence in accordance with established evidence procedures. All actions taken with respect to retention of media shall be appropriately documented.

The type of video surveillance technology employed and the manner in which recordings are used and stored will affect retention periods. The recordings should be stored and retained in accordance with the established records retention schedule.

333.5.1 EVIDENTIARY INTEGRITY

All downloaded and retained media shall be treated in the same manner as other evidence. Media shall be accessed, maintained, stored, and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements.

333.6 RELEASE OF VIDEO IMAGES

All recorded video images gathered by the public safety video surveillance equipment are for the official use of the Chicopee Police Department.

Requests for recorded video images from the public or the media shall be processed in the same manner as requests for department public records.

Requests for recorded images from other law enforcement agencies shall be referred to a supervisor for release in accordance with a specific and legitimate law enforcement purpose.

Recorded video images that are the subject of a court order or subpoena shall be processed in accordance with the established department subpoena process.

333.7 VIDEO SURVEILLANCE AUDIT

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee will conduct a periodic review of the public safety video surveillance system. The review should include an analysis of the cost, benefit, and effectiveness of the system, including any public safety issues that were effectively addressed or any significant prosecutions that resulted, and any systemic operational or administrative issues that were identified, including those related to training, discipline, or policy.

Any recommendations for training or policy should be promptly addressed.

333.8 TRAINING

All department members authorized to operate or access public safety video surveillance systems shall receive appropriate training. Training should include guidance on the use of cameras, interaction with dispatch and patrol operations, and a review regarding relevant policies and

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procedures, including this policy. Training should also address commonwealth and federal law related to the use of video surveillance equipment and privacy.

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